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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses California's Cost Effective Demonstration Reading Programs--Reading for Survival, which operate on the premise that the junior high school years are an optimum time for intensive instruction in reading. The programs use a diagnostic/prescriptive approach. This begins with diagnostic testing of all students, followed by the prescription of an individualized learning program for each student. To coordinate the extensive individual programs, an effective management system is necessary; each successful California Demonstration Program has a management system developed at the school site to meet the specific needs of the individual school population. Examples of some of the record keeping and management materials developed at the De Anza Junior High School Reading Center are included. The role and responsibilities of the project director are also discussed. (AA)

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INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION 22ND ANNUAL CONVENTION

SYMPOSIUM: READING FOR SURVIVAL
(California's Cost Effective Demonstration Reading Programs--Reading for Survival)

Wednesday, May 4, 1977, 2:00 - 4:45, Doral Beach Hotel

DIAGNOSIS, PRESCRIPTIONS, MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE DIRECTOR'S ROLE

by

Ann Glaser, Project Director,
Demonstration Reading Program,
Ontario-Montclair School District

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DIAGNOSIS, PRESCRIPTIONS, MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE DIRECTOR'S ROLE by Ann Glaser, Project Director, Demonstration Reading Program, De Anza Junior High School, Ontario, California

Teach reading to junior high school students? Why bother?! They should have learned to read in elementary school---everyone knows that the primary grades are THE place to teach reading---

That happens to be one of many misconceptions in education, especially in the field of reading. A recent Stanford Research Institute Report (L.A. Times, 1974) identified adolescence as a time of high learning potential. Research indicates that the adolescent years are an extremely fruitful time for academic learning because the child finally approaches full development of his intellectual capacity and is capable for the first time of making independent and reasoned decisions.

California's Demonstration Programs operate on the premise that the junior high school years are an optimum time for intensive instruction in reading.

Consider for a moment an incoming class of several hundred seventh graders. Their reading abilities range from first grade to twelfth grade. Many are from economically and culturally depressed backgrounds;

many have known little but failure in elementary school; they represent many races and some speak and understand very little English; some are dedicated learners yet others could care less about school. Truly a diverse lot and all will enter the reading program. What happens next?

DIAGNOSIS

Basic to all of California's Demonstration Reading Programs is the commitment to a diagnostic/prescriptive approach. Diagnostic testing is necessary to determine the strengths, weaknesses, and interests of students, and to identify any physical problems which might interfere with learning. The student's background of experience, dominant language, linguistic style and fluency with English must be considered.

(Mr. Tucker has covered diagnostic procedures available for use by the classroom teacher in content areas---this presentation refers to diagnostic procedures used by reading specialists in a reading center or lab.) Appropriate diagnostic tests determine strengths and weaknesses a student has in many aspects of reading---word attack, vocabulary and comprehension. Although different diagnostic tools are used throughout the demonstration programs--such as the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales, Reading Miscue Inventory and a variety of informal tests and inventories, all projects provide several means of assessing reading abilities and needs for without accurate diagnosis one is only guessing. However, no student should be tested more than is necessary to gain adequate information.

PRESCRIPTION

Once diagnostic testing is completed, a prescription should be written to implement a personalized, individualized learning program for each student. Integration of the diagnostic/prescriptive approach is important yet uncommon according to George Spache who recently wrote, "Despite refinements in diagnosis and remediation in reading in the last twenty or so years, there is still a wide spread lack of integration between these two processes . . . In many instances, it seems that the two processes are carried on by different persons between whom there is a distinct lack of communication . . . Whatever the reasons, the incoordination between diagnosis and remediation is a relatively common phenomenon." (Spache, 1976)

Because the teachers in California's Demonstration Programs have specialized training in reading, they overcome the lack of integration discussed by Dr. Spache by providing both the diagnosis and the prescription for remediation. After diagnosis, a prescription is written for each student to remediate weaknesses, increase strengths and provide materials to enhance a student's desire to read for pleasure. The diagnostic/prescriptive process, of course, is ongoing and continuous as each student works closely with his/her reading teacher in an individualized program designed to meet identified needs.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

How is it possible to provide extensive individual programs for several hundred students who are in reading class only 45 to 52 minutes a day in junior high and maybe for only half of the year?

The key is an effective management system. However, a word of caution; last November at the California Reading Association Conference in Sacramento, both Jeannette Veatch and Nicholas Silvaroli made Californians aware of the dangers of management systems that dehumanize the classroom by involving teachers in such extensive behavioral objectives and record keeping that they have little time for interaction with the students.

Each successful California Demonstration Program has an effective management system that has been developed at the school site to meet the specific needs of the individual school population. (Examples of the materials described will be available for you during the group discussion period.) Each project maintains a system of record keeping that is a central source of information. For example, a profile sheet may summarize test data, provide a check list of reading difficulties and an initial prescription to facilitate individual growth. In addition, an interest inventory and self-concept test may be included in the teachers resource file on each student.

A good management system should include some form of record keeping that is easily understood by the student so that s/he knows exactly what has been prescribed, what progress is being made and what s/he should do next. Immediate positive, constructive feedback is essential to involve the student responsibly in the rewards of successful learning.

The Demonstration Programs use a variety of methods such as contracts and record booklets that guide a student in daily activities.

A contract is used by several projects. The contract is an agreement between each student and his/her teacher that is negotiated in an individual conference. The student shares responsibility for learning by helping to select activities that will help him/her learn new skills and reinforce others. The contract is both an instructional plan and a system of daily record keeping that provides immediate positive encouragement for the students.

Some projects use a record book containing pages for each program. Again, the program prescriptions are included in each student's folder so he knows precisely what he is to do and why.

Evaluation is an important part of the diagnostic/prescriptive approach. In most of the demonstration programs the student is very much involved in the evaluation of his attitudes, behavior and academic progress. Students have shown real insight identifying the lessons that have been valuable and what they still need to work on to improve needed skills. Some examples of student comments written during contract evaluation include:

> "The Reading Center has helped me a lot in my study skills. I've learned to read faster and understand what I've read."
>
> "I think the 7th grade Reading Center has helped me improve in all subjects."
>
> "Well I'm doing good in here. I do not like some of the other classes but here I do because they care about people here."

Each management system is designed to facilitate instruction for the teacher and to build a sense of responsibility and feelings of self worth in the student as s/he finds success within the framework

of his/her personally prescribed program of instruction.

Vital to the management of a reading program is a well delineated design of instructional materials. Selecting materials carefully to cover a wide range of abilities and interests is necessary; organizing the materials to provide easy access to students is essential; describing materials to assist visitors is valuable.

Several of the Demonstration Reading Programs have developed resource books or annotated bibliographies describing materials and systems they use. They were developed to assist project teachers in utilizing a wide variety of materials as they write prescriptions for individualized instruction. De Anza Designs Resources in Reading is one example of a resource booklet that provides specific information about all major materials being used in the Reading Center.

THE DIRECTOR'S ROLE

Each of California's Demonstration Programs is coordinated by a Project Director who has the rare opportunity to work with persons on the local, district and state levels who are concerned about reading. It is a great privilege to serve as a project director, an exciting, challenging and many-faceted role.

The primary responsibility of each director is to be coordinator, educational leader and facilitator of his/her own project. This involves selecting, supervising and evaluating staff; promoting professional growth through staff development/inservice programs; establishing a supportive environment to foster good interpersonal relations among staff and students; implementing a continuous program of diagnosis, prescription, individualized instruction and

assessment to enable each student to find success and grow as much as possible during his junior high years. Additional project responsibilities include evaluating, selecting and utilizing instructional materials to meet the needs of the project students, and managing the operational duties of the project such as budget, correspondence, publicity, and public relations.

The Project Director serves as a liaison between the project and the rest of school, the project and the local district, other school districts, and other Demonstration schools; between the project and the State Department of Education. Throughout the state of California project directors are serving on committees to help establish competency levels as required by recent legislation.

Directors of California's Demonstration Programs have a major responsibility for demonstration and dissemination by speaking at conferences, workshops, college classes, service organizations and parent advisory groups as well as writing materials about the project and its cost-effective components which are widely disseminated throughout the United States. Several of us have served as the chairperson for the annual California Demonstration Programs Conferences. In addition, each of us hosts hundreds of visitors a year who want to observe our programs in operation and learn about them in detail.

We relish the job! Coordinating a hand-picked highly skilled staff dedicated to helping each student find success in reading is challenging and exciting. Watching students blossom as they gain confidence in themselves and their abilities is rewarding. Sharing ideas,

approaches, materials, successes and concerns about reading with others, with you, is very gratifying. Thank you.

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DE ANZA JUNIOR HIGH READING CENTER

STUDENT PROFILE

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

PHONE_____

BIRTHDAY_____

DATE ENTERED_____

GRADE SCHOOL ATTENDED_____

PROFILE SUMMARY

1. Interest Inventory _____
2. Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty _____
3. Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test _____
4. Informal Diagnosis of Reading Skills _____
5. Diagnostic Reading Inventory - Silvaroli _____
6. C.T.B.S. _____ _____ _____ _____
7. C.T.B.S. Item Analysis _____ _____
8. Self-Concept _____ _____ _____ _____
9. Slosson Intelligence Test _____
10. Visual Screening _____
11. Auditory Screening _____

TEACHER_____ GROUP_____ PERIOD_____

TEACHER_____ GROUP_____ PERIOD_____

TESTING RECORD

C.T.B.S.	Date	Form Level	Raw Score	Grade Level	Date	Form Level	Raw Score	Grade Level	Gain
Vocabulary	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Comprehension			___	___			___	___	___
Total Reading			___	___			___	___	___
C.T.B.S.									
Vocabulary	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Comprehension			___	___			___	___	___
Total Reading			___	___			___	___	___

DURRELL ANALYSIS of Reading Difficulty	Date	
	Grade Level	
Oral Reading	___	___
Silent Reading	___	___
Listening	___	___
Word Flash	___	___
Word Analysis	___	___
Letter Naming	___	___
Visual Memory - Prim.	___	___
Visual Memory - Inter.	___	___
Sounds	___	___
Phonic Spelling	___	___

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC Reading Test - Level I	DATE	
	Grade Level	
	___	___
	Stanine	
Reading Comprehension	___	___
Vocabulary	___	___
Auditory Discrimination	___	___
Syllabication	___	___
Beginning and ending sounds	___	___
Blending	___	___
Sound Discrimination	___	___

INFORMAL DIAGNOSIS of Reading Skills	Date	
	No. of Errors	
Dolch List	___	___
Context Clues	___	___
Consonant Sounds	___	___
Consonant Substitutions	___	___
Long Vowels	___	___
Blending	___	___
Reversals	___	___
Prefixes	___	___
Suffixes	___	___
Compound Words	___	___
Syllabication	___	___
Root Words	___	___
Silent Letters	___	___
Initial Blends	___	___

STANFORD DIAGNOSTIC Reading Test - Level II	Date	
	Grade Level	
Reading Comprehension	___	___
	Stanine	
Literal	___	___
Inferential	___	___
Total Reading	___	___
Vocabulary	___	___
Syllabication	___	___
Sound Discrimination	___	___
Blending	___	___
Rate	___	___

Date

VISUAL SCREENING ___ _____

AUDITORY SCREENING ___ _____

OTHER TESTING: _____

DIAGNOSTIC READING INVENTORY - Silvaroli

GRADE	PART I	PART II - ORAL			ESTIMATED LEVELS	
	% of words correct	WR	Comp	H.C.		Grade
PP					INDEPENDENT	_____
1 P					INSTRUCTIONAL	_____ (range)
1 I						
2					FRUSTRATION	_____
3						
4						
5					(Hear. Capacity)	_____
6						
7						
8						

DIAGNOSIS (Check List of Difficulties):

1. Oral Communication
   - _____ Poor knowledge of standard English
   - _____ Dialect
   - _____ Low verbal ability

2. Listening Comprehension
   - _____ Understanding of material heard

3. Visual Perception
   - _____ Visual Memory of words

4. Word Analysis
   - _____ Knowledge of alphabet
   - _____ Knowledge of phonics
   - _____ Use of context clues
   - _____ Syllabication
   - _____ Knowledge of affixes

5. Oral Reading
   - _____ Word-by-word reading
   - _____ Incorrect phrasing
   - _____ Ignores punctuation
   - _____ Reversals
   - _____ Repetitions
   - _____ Substitutions
   - _____ Omissions
   - _____ Low sight vocabulary
   - _____ Guesses at unknown words from context
   - _____ Ignores word errors
   - _____ Word-calling
   - _____ Rate

6. Comprehension
   - _____ Inadequate Vocabulary
   - _____ Understanding of main ideas
   - _____ Sequencing
   - _____ Recalling details
   - _____ Drawing conclusions
   - _____ Cause and effect relationships
   - _____ Inferencing
   - _____ Understanding author's purpose

7. Silent Reading
   _____ Vocalization
   _____ Rate
   _____ Poor Comprehension

8. Study Skills
   _____ Following directions
   _____ Critical reading
   _____ Use of reference materials
   _____ Skimming and scanning

9. General Reading Habits
   _____ Marked insecurity
   _____ Low effort
   _____ Easily distracted

_____

_____

_____

READING LEVEL	Date	Level	Date	Level
Independent	____	____	____	____
Instructional		____		____
Frustration		____		____

PRESCRIPTION/INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN:

1. Visual Perception: _____

   _____

2. Word Attack: _____

   _____

3. Vocabulary: _____

   _____

4. Study Skills: _____

   _____

5. Comprehension/Rate: _____

   _____

   _____

6. Motivation: _____

   _____

De Anza Reading Center

CONTRACT

NAME _____ CONTRACT NUMBER _____

READING TEACHER _____ STARTING DATE _____

ENGLISH TEACHER _____ COMPLETION DATE _____

SCHEDULE NUMBER _____ POINTS EARNED _____

CLASS PERIOD _____ RECEIVED _____

Minimum points for contract completion:

Basic Contract _____

Independent Reading _____

TOTAL _____

Number Per Column	Instructional Materials	Points Per Lesson	Completed Lessons	Points Earned		
	VISUAL PERCEPTION:					
	Tach-X	5				
	Processing	5				
	Visual Tracking	5				
	Flash-X	5				
	WORD ATTACK:					
	Aud-X Story/Sampler	5				
	Aux-X Word Study	5				
	Reach/Score/Cracking the Code	7/2/5				
	Clues	5				
	Systems 80	5				
	Diagnostic/Prescriptive Program	5				
	VOCABULARY:					
	Word Clues	5/7				
	Word Craft	7				
	Language Master	5				
	Creative Reading	5				
	STUDY SKILLS:					
	Study Skills Library	7				
	Aud-X Dictionary Skills	10				
	Countdown	2				
	Using the Thesaurus	5				
	Skimming and Scanning	5				
	COMPREHENSION/RATE:					
	Controlled Reader	10				
	Go Magazine	5				
	Comp. Power Paragraphs	5				
	Listening	5				
	Sprint	5				
	Specific Skills	5				
	Reading for Concepts	5				
	Dimensions in Reading	5				
	R.F.U.	5				
	Action Unit/Double Action Unit	5				

Number Per Column	Instructional Materials	Points Per Lesson	Completed Lessons	Points Earned
	Breakthrough	5		
	Sports Program/Sports Kit	5		
	Play the Game	5		
	Real Stories	5		
	Crossroads	5		
	Directions	5		
	Imagination/Magnificent Myths	5		
	Action Series	5		
	A.R.P.L.	5		
	Open-Ended Stories	5		
	Modern Short Biographies	5		
	Short Story Scene	5		
	Life Styles	5		
	Native Voices	5		
	A.E.P.	5		
	Inquiry	5		
	RECREATIONAL READING			
	Scope Plays/Plays for Reading	5		
	Preschool Library	10		
	U.S.S.R.	5		
	Independent Reading	20		
			TOTAL	
			CONTRACT TOTAL	

DAILY RECORD

M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	TOTAL

Student Signature

Teacher Signature

CONTRACT EVALUATION

I. Three things I learned while working on my contract:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

II. The reading skills I need to work on:

_____ Word Attack (figuring out words)

_____ Vocabulary (learning new words)

_____ Study Skills (how to do better in school)

_____ Comprehension (understanding what I read)

_____ Rate (learning to read faster)

III. Two kinds of lessons I found the most helpful:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

IV. Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

DE ANZA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NAME_____

Grade_____ Quarter_____ DATE_____

DE ANZA READING CENTER STUDENT EVALUATION

OUR PROGRAM IS DESIGNED SO THAT EACH STUDENT WILL:

1. Have the personal guidance of the Reading Center Counselor and teachers.
2. Start where he is now and show progress in reading.
3. Develop a belief in his own ability and self-worth.
4. Enjoy learning.
5. Learn to evaluate his own work.
6. Understand that his progress is an individual matter, not a comparison with the work and standards of others.

	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	
I.					LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
					1. The student completes his/her individual assignments.
					2. The student shows progress in needed areas of reading.
					3. The student understands what he/she reads.
					4. The student enjoys reading for pleasure and knowledge.
					5. The student shows growth in his/her ability to evaluate his/her own work.
II.					BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES:
					1. The student tries hard to do his/her best.
					2. The student makes good use of his/her time.
					3. The student works well independently.
					4. The student works well with others.
					5. The student shows consideration for others.

III. STUDENT COMMENTS:

IV. TEACHER COMMENTS:

RESEARCH PUTS NEW EMPHASIS ON TEEN-AGE EDUCATION

A Summary of a Stanford Research Institute Report

Jack McCurdy, Times Education Writer
Los Angeles Times, Part II, Sunday,
February 17, 1974

Not long ago, life in school for a very young child was often crammed with aimless playtime, a sort of all-day recess.

But the rigor of academia has invaded the classroom in recent years, and children are going to school at younger and younger ages.

It is a part of the early childhood education movement that is sweeping the country, perhaps the most significant school trend of the 1970s - a trend that has gone largely unchallenged until now.

Massive research during the 1960s had indicated a "critical period" (generally before age 7) for the development of intelligence and, therefore, the ideal time to intervene with intellectual stimulation.

But a major new research study says all this is a mistake.

It may well be, a Stanford Research Institute report says, that adolescence - not early childhood - is the best time for intellectual development.

"A new, and still small, wave of writings is now beginning to picture young teenagers not as a bundle of pimply neuroses but as youths with a far wider variety of skills, enthusiasm and potentials," the study declares.

The latest body of research, it continues, portrays early adolescence (between ages 10 and 14) "as an extremely fruitful time for academic learning."

"It is the time when the child finally approaches the full development of his intellectual capacity and, in addition, is capable for the first time of making independent and reasoned decisions..."

The study also contains an analysis of state reports evaluating compensatory education programs. The analysis shows children in the lower grades do not make the best progress even though funds are focused on these pupils.

For example, California's evaluation ("perhaps the most reliable of the state reports") makes it "easy to recognize that the older students are outstripping the younger students" in academic achievement, the study says.

"...Even in the face of widespread apathy and neglect of their needs and abilities," it adds, "young adolescents have responded positively to remedial efforts."

The report, prepared by SRI researcher Meredith L. Robinson for the federal government, calls for an immediate end to the practice of favoring young children with the largest proportion of special school funds.

Regular state and local funds are still generally distributed on a basis favoring secondary schools because their operational costs are supposed to be higher than those of elementary schools.

But there has been a growing number of special programs designed just for the very young.

At present, the report said, about 85% of the $2 billion spent annually on compensatory education by the federal government goes for the younger pupils and only 15% on adolescents.

The state of California allocates more than $150 million a year for special elementary programs, not to mention the millions spent by local school districts in this fashion.

Wilson Riles, state superintendent of public instruction, has made early childhood education the backbone of his campaign to revitalize the public schools of California.

The SRI report urges "a major retargeting of funds to the junior-high level to offset the current concentration on the elementary grades".

Also recommended is a complete reexamination of the national policy that has helped spread the early childhood movement, as well as a comprehensive research effort into the learning capabilities of older children.

However, the report stops short of proposing that early childhood programs be abandoned or that funds be concentrated on adolescents.

This is because many of the conclusions must remain tentative due to a lack of knowledge about the makeup of adolescents, it explains.

But "at the very least," the report adds, "a more balanced pattern of funding is indicated" by the findings.

Constantine Menges, deputy assistant secretary of health, education and welfare, said the report is the first to draw together a growing number of studies in the area of child learning.

He said his office "is very interested in the policy directions that the findings suggested".

Menges said SRI was conducting further research and his office plans an issue paper soon that may affect HEW policy on funds for adolescent schooling during the 1975-76 year.

The early childhood movement began to expand rapidly after the federal government introduced the Head Start and compensatory education programs in the mid-1960s.

These programs, representing a major increase of federal aid to education, resulted "from an overeagerness to jump on the bandwagon of early childhood research of the '60," the SRI study says.

Here is the way researcher Robinson pieces the picture together:

Part of the enthusiasm for early childhood education stemmed from popular ideas about education and poverty that were current at the time.

The common belief was that the "cycle of poverty" was perpetuated because children modeled themselves after "their poor, powerless and alienated parents.

"Thus, they suffered from a handicap caused by an inadequate environment in which their intellectual and social development had been damaged during the 'formative years'."

It seemed obvious that "what was required was extra attention during the preschool years and the primary grades".

At about the same time, early childhood research was beginning to produce its findings about the development of intelligence in young children.

The researchers of the 1960s, such as McVicker Hunt and Benjamin Bloom, concluded that the development of intelligence stabilized at about age 7 with up to 80% of a child's intellectual capacity being formed by then.

"By focusing on this early and highly malleable period, the disadvantages incurred by socially and economically deprived children were seen as being remediable only during the earliest school exposure."

In addition, the heavy federal financing of the investigations also created important new education interest groups influential in pressing for public policies and funds to implement the findings in the form of new school programs.

Also at this time, the postwar baby boom children were beginning to mature producing a flood of teen-agers that seemed to bewilder adults.

"The sheer numbers of young teen-agers and the resulting confusion tended to reinforce an impression of teen-agers as incomprehensible and unmanageable."

Ms. Robinson theorizes that "the preoccupation of the society with these youths' social and personal adjustments was transformed into a belief that adolescents themselves were interested only in these areas to the exclusion of less flashy intellectual pursuits."

But changes in thinking have occurred since those days.

The "parents as failure" theory has been replaced in the minds of many educators with the "school as failure" model.

It now appears that the schools themselves are at least partly to blame for the low achievement of "disadvantaged" children and somehow perpetuate the academic "handicaps" they seek to eliminate.

Evaluations also indicate "that even when compensatory education programs provided some gains in cognitive achievement during the primary grades, these gains quickly dissipated when 'treatment' stopped".

In the area of research, the ideas are still based on the work of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who believes that child development comes in stages. But there has been a shift in emphasis.

The new view is that "intelligence is not a static, locked-in ability with which individuals are born and which changes little over time. Rather, intelligence is a set of abilities which develops over a long period of time and which changes its basic nature as it develops".

For example, pioneering research by Prof. William Rowher of UC Berkeley indicates that "the period between 9 and 15 is the time at which most children have developed, for the first time, the ability to respond to a wide variety of teaching approaches because they are able to mobilize a more or less 'complete' set of cognitive skills".

He believes that "the junior high years are a time when the good teacher has at his disposal a sudden new array of possible methods by which to teach basic skills".

Prof. Jerome Kagan of Harvard in very recent research has shown that intellectual development is linked closely with varying social and cultural situations. He performed studies comparing Guatemalan and American children.

The social environment, he contends, largely determines the rate at which skills are mastered, the degree to which they are developed and possibly the order in which they are acquired.

This runs counter to previous theories that the rate, degree and order of skill acquisition are caused by differences in basic intelligence among individuals.

Based on Kagan's work, it is possible that American ghetto children are not ready for skill acquisition until after their middle-class counterparts.

Indeed, a large portion of American children may not be prepared for the academic demands of first grade, although this does not mean they cannot easily acquire skills later and grow into normal adults.

In many schools, however, children "are not given the option of delaying their start until greater cognitive development has been attained but become the bottom of the class and are pressed harder and harder to master skills which are temporarily beyond their reach".

Ms. Robinson said this can result in "an antipathy to school and school work so great and a sense of personal failure so profound that the capacities, once in place, may never be applied to the tasks for academic learning".

Of course, much depends on the atmosphere of early childhood classrooms. But the fear is that with the heavy emphasis on the opportunity for intellectual development at an early age, the pressure will be intense.

"From this perspective," she said, "it is a great deal easier to understand why the evaluation of such efforts as the national Head Start program and of (federal compensatory education) projects in the early grades leave the impression that we are battering our collective heads against a brick wall and why when small reading or IQ gains are attained, they seem to disappear so quickly."

The evaluation studies of state compensatory education programs are the latest evidence challenging the early childhood concept.

The SRI study indicates that reports on only 12 states were available in formats which allowed comparisons of achievement between younger and older children.

But they consistently favored the older youngsters in test gains for reading and mathematics.

Among the reports comparing achievement scores of elementary and secondary students, "it is remarkable that...not one reported that older students benefited less than younger students and in three instances the average gain of older students was dramatically higher..."

Various explanations have been offered for this.

One is that the lowest achieving students have dropped out before reaching secondary schools.

Another is that only the most promising "underachievers" go into secondary compensatory programs, or that youngsters from special elementary programs are selected for secondary programs, giving them a cumulative benefit of compensatory classes.

Some officials argue that the secondary programs are superior because only the best are retained with the limited money available at that level.

Others contend students needing compensatory education in junior and senior high school are so far behind that it is relatively easy for them to make big academic gains with help.

But Ms. Robinson said she doubts that any of these explanations "contradicts the point I'm trying to make.

"Certainly, important things are going on beneath the data. But I feel quite confident in saying that the deliberate policy of directing money away from the (adolescent) age group does not have any substance. It seems to be an unreasonable inequity."

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